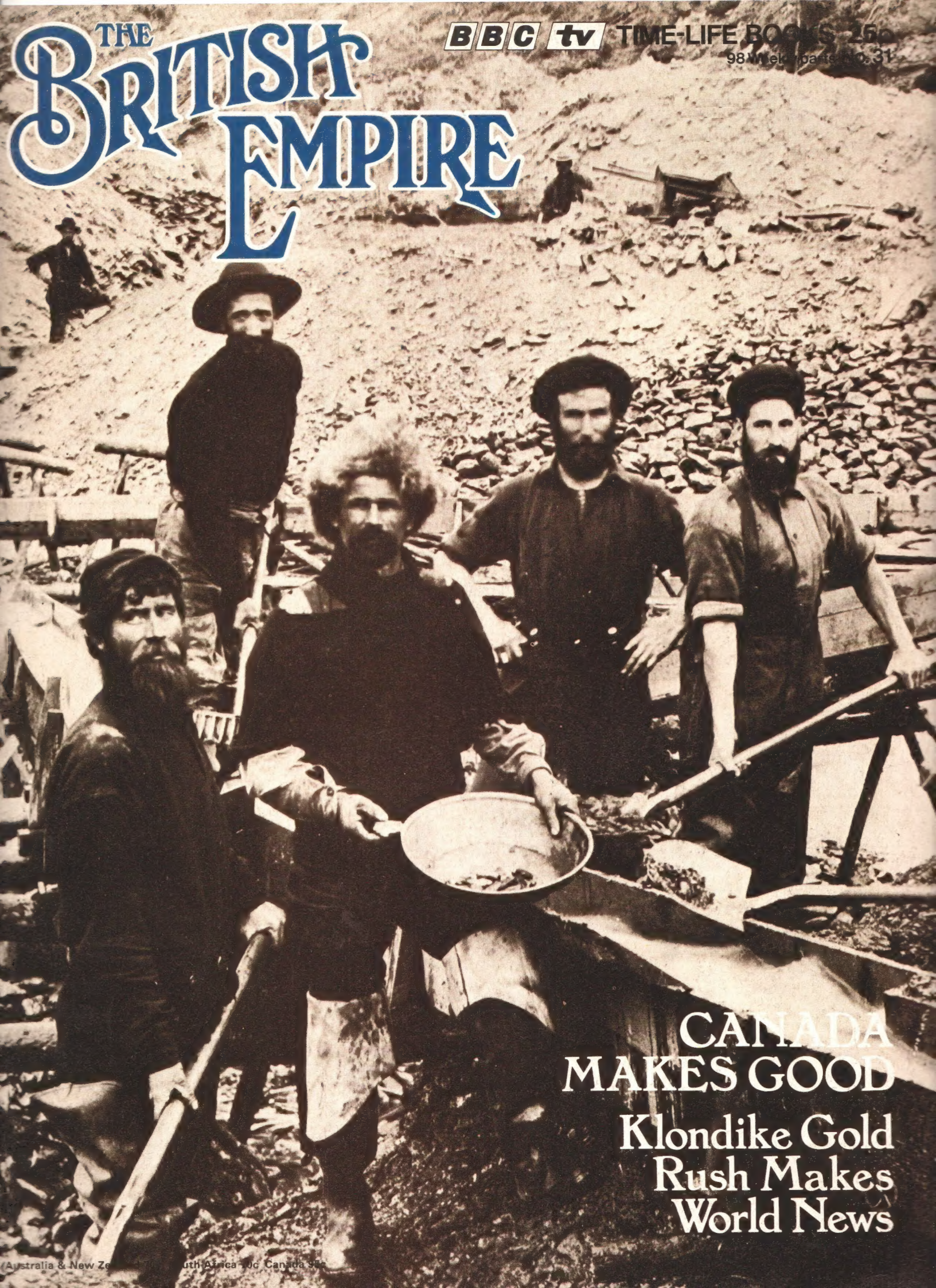
THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
98 Weekly parts No. 31



CANADA MAKES GOOD

Klondike Gold Rush Makes World News

(Australia & New Ze... ...uth Africa 70c Canada 9...

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
98 Weekly parts No. 31

Editor Harold C. Field
Deputy Editor John Man
Picture Editor Jean I. Tennant
Design Consultant Louis Klein
Staff Writers Stephen Webbe
Simon Rigge
Hilary Macaskill
Picture Researchers Marian Berman
Pamela Marke
Art Director Robert Hook
Assistant Art Director Graham Davis
Art Assistant Bridget Allan
Editorial Assistant Anne Morgan
Staff Photographer Eileen Tweedy
Partwork Director Kurt Medina
Sales Director George Gillespie
Consultants D. K. Fieldhouse, Lecturer in Commonwealth History and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford
A. F. Madden, Reader in Commonwealth Government and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford

JIM HICKS, author of the text sections of this issue, is a product of Britain's First Empire, America. Born in Texas, he received an MA from Northwestern University where he read political science and history. As London Bureau Chief for LIFE magazine, he wrote an eyewitness report of the events accompanying Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence. He now lives and works in London.

Subscriptions – These are available at £6·50 for six months, inclusive of postage and packing. For addresses outside of the United Kingdom, the rate is £8·75, inclusive of surface postage and packing.
Back Numbers – These are available at your local newsagent or may be secured by post for the inclusive price of 25p per issue. Be sure and specify which issue(s) you desire.
Orders for both subscriptions and back numbers should be sent, with remittance, to *The British Empire*, BBC Publications, 35 Marylebone High St., London W1M 4AA.
Binders – These may be ordered at £1·05 for the Standard edition and £1·75 for the Deluxe edition, either individually or on subscription. Orders, with remittance, should be sent to *British Empire Binders*, BBC Publications, P.O. Box No. 126, London SE1 5JZ.
NOTE: All above payments should be by crossed cheque/P.O.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: (*t*=top; *b*=bottom; *l*=left; *r*=right). Cover and 865: University of Washington Library, Seattle. Inside back cover: The Parker Gallery, London. Trustees of the British Museum 842/3, 850*l*, 862; Canadian Pacific 853*b*, 854*b*, 868; Glenbow Alberta Institute, Calgary, Alberta 863, 864*b*, 866/7*t*; Hudson's Bay Company 859; Manitoba Archives 848*l*, 854*t*, 855; National Portrait Gallery 844; McCord Museum, McGill University 845, (Notman Photographic Archives 851*l*, 852, 853*t*); Public Archives of Canada 848/9, 857, 858, 866*bl*; Radio Times Hulton Picture Library 846, 850/1, 864*t*; University of Washington Library, Seattle 860/1, 866*tl*, 866/7*b*, 867*tr*, 867*br*. PHOTOGRAPHERS: R. B. Fleming & Co. 842/3, 850*l*, 862; Eileen Tweedy inside back cover.

© 1972. Time-Life International (Nederland) N.V.

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Published by Time-Life/BBC.

Printed in England by Jarrold and Sons Ltd. Norwich.

No. 32. A Remote Elite. Appalled by the 1857 Mutiny, the British in India withdrew more and more into a world of their own, isolated from and suspicious of the "real India."

No. 33. The Mystique of Empire. In the 1880s, the imperial concept – a strange combination of idealism, arrogance and superficial patriotism – acquired wide popularity.

CONTENTS

841. Canada Makes Good
The struggle to create a federated nation out of the various, widely separated colonies that made up British North America.

850. Picture Essay: Canadian Pacific Railway
Despite repeated political and financial crises, the rails that linked the east and west coasts of Canada were finally completed.

856. The Welding of the Nation
Sir John A. Macdonald, spurred by the vision of a united Canada, faced rebellions, political crises and the building of a transcontinental railroad.

860. Picture Essay: The Klondike Gold Rush
When the news of a gold-strike in the remote Klondike region reached the outside world, a horde of fortune-seekers pushed their way through impossible terrain in their pursuit of riches.

868. Canada Comes of Age
Suddenly, after decades of painfully slow progress, Canada begins to reap the harvest of success. People come to stay and ask the hard questions about Canada's future.

Cover: Successful miners in the Klondike grin with pleasure as they survey the results of their backbreaking work – a fine collection of nuggets of gold caught in their sluice-box.

CANADA MAKES GOOD

The story of Canada's early years is the story of any new country in the age of European expansion – pioneers, merchants and politicians busily creating a new society. Except that in Canada the process was speeded up. In the 1850s, Canada consisted of independent British colonies, isolated from each other in a vast continent. Then, in a mere 50 years, unification was achieved with the aid of a coast-to-coast railway, the expansionist U.S. was repulsed, and the new country took its place in the comity of nations.

By Jim Hicks

In the mid-19th Century, hardly anyone could have foreseen British North America – the area making up modern Canada – as a united country. Settlements, colonies and provinces were separated by vast distances and by local concerns; the forces that were one day to impose unity were pathetically weak and disjointed.

One episode in particular highlighted the apparent insignificance of these little groups. One night in June, 1866, a ragtag band of 800 United States Civil War veterans of Irish ancestry slipped across the Niagara River into Canada. Their aim was grandiose – to establish an Irish republic in British North America and from it to wage an undefined but no doubt glorious campaign against England.

The Fenians, as they were known, won a brief scuffle with Canadian volunteers, and then learning that reinforcements were coming, escaped across the river.

As a military encounter, it was insignificant. Only nine Canadians were killed; no territory was won or lost; neither side, to say the least, covered itself in immortal glory. But the abortive raid and others which took place during that period would have great consequences. "Some peoples," paraphrased a Canadian historian, "are born nations, some achieve nationhood, and others have nationhood thrust upon them." The marauding Fenians were not aware of it, but they were a part of the thrusting of nationhood on Canada.

In doing so, they were joining forces with unlikely allies, among them the fervently anti-British U.S. Congress, the Free Trade bloc of the British Parliament, America's expansionist Secretary of State, an ailing railway company, powerful London bankers and powerless half-breed frontiersmen. Some, like the Fenians, were oblivious of what they were achieving; others worked with determined purpose. All, in their own ways, were helping to create out of widely different areas the nation we know today as Canada.

The oldest colony, Newfoundland, rode the Atlantic like a great ship anchored off the North American coast, looking eastward to the sea, from which the Newfoundlanders harvested their fish, and to Europe, where they sold their catch. To the Newfoundlanders, other British North Americans were potential competitors, as were the despised Americans and French who already had access by treaty to the shores of their island. Newfoundland imported some wheat from the Province of Canada – a small area, then, in comparison to the vast country that was soon to bear the same name – but was convinced that nothing could be gained from a closer relationship.

The Maritime Provinces – Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island – also turned their backs, geographically and culturally, on Canada. Proud of their famous seamanship, their conservative tradition and their superior education, the Maritimers looked down on the less-refined inland society, a feeling that became increasingly heightened even though the era of wooden sailing-ships, which had made them rich, began to wane while the Canadians to the west grew more prosperous.

During the winter, when the St. Lawrence River was frozen, Halifax on the Atlantic and Montreal some 500 miles away might as well have been on separate planets, so impassable were the trackless woodlands between them. The Maritime region's natural commercial centre, in fact, should have been Boston, but long memories of Loyalist families, refugees from the American revolution, kept the Maritimes bound to London and Empire. Only a railroad could bind them to Canada. Despite much talk of the project, there was none.

The most populous colony, Canada, was not even united within itself. The fusion of the old French and British provinces effected in 1841 on Lord Durham's recommendation had been a failure. Instead of merging into the English population, the French-speaking *Canadiens* became fiercely resolved to protect their language and culture. They were outnumbered – less than a million to 1½ million British Canadians – but they maintained their political identity.

In order for the provincial government to function at all, the two nationalities had to support a series of strange and strained coalitions. Ten of these precarious administrations came and went between 1854 and 1864, hardly an indication of the stability needed to lead half a continent into union. And while the

businessmen of Montreal and Toronto may have yearned to be tied to the British Atlantic coast by rails, their only year-round outlet to the sea was the Grand Trunk Railway, opened in 1853, terminating in the U.S., at Portland, Maine.

To the north and west were the immense territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, almost unpopulated but for Indians, a few traders, and the Métis, a people of mixed French and Indian origin who made up the Red River Colony in present-day Manitoba. Here was a potentially rich agricultural region, but there was no way to make use of it without a railway across the rugged, barren geological formation called the Pre-Cambrian Shield.

From this area as from Canada in the East, geography dictated the southward paths of commerce to the United States. The Hudson's Bay Company, for example, communicated with its colony via St. Paul, Minnesota, rather than through the bay after which it was named. There was no barrier here; only an imaginary line separated the British plains from the American plains, and American settlers found it increasingly easy to ignore.

Finally, beyond the Rocky Mountains lay Britain's Pacific provinces, originally controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company. Vancouver Island was made a Crown colony in 1849 to secure its naval base for the Crown. After the discovery of gold on the Fraser River drew 20,000 American prospectors to British Columbia in 1858, it, too, was given colonial status. The long struggle with the United States over the Oregon territory, concluded by treaty in 1846, was too recent a memory for London to take any chances. Vancouver was united with mainland British Columbia in 1866.

British Columbia was more remote from Canada or Nova Scotia than was Europe. The only practical way to get there was by sea, all the way round Cape Horn. The natural commercial centre of this British colony was San Francisco, California.

Some British North Americans, of

"Canada" in 1851, the date of this map, was just one of several colonies in British North America. Even in 1867, the new Dominion of Canada consisted only of the old colony of Canada (green), New Brunswick (pink) and Nova Scotia (orange). The North-West Territories (yellow) were added in 1870 and British Columbia (blue) in 1871. But unification was not complete till Newfoundland (also blue) joined in 1949.

course, knew that the great legacy of potential nationhood they had inherited upon the breakdown of the old colonial system after American independence could only be fully realized through some kind of union of the colonies. But the difficulties at first seemed insurmountable. When the British American League met in 1849 in the first shock of newly bestowed responsible government, suggestions of federation were dismissed as impractical and premature, even by John Alexander Macdonald, who would later become the leading proponent of union.

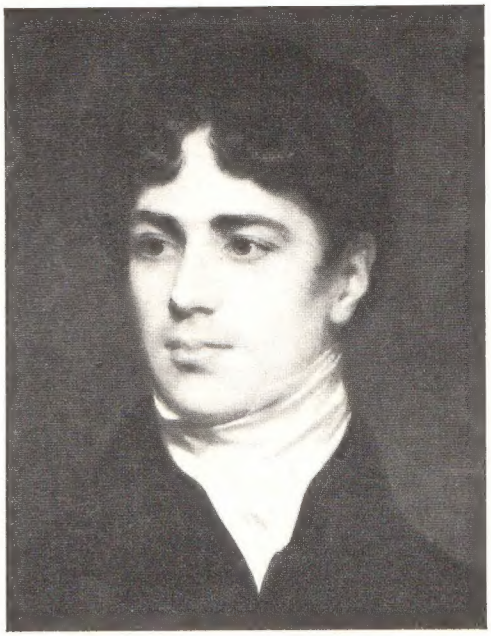
For the moment the colonies had enough to do adjusting their economies to their new, independent situations. The repeal of the Corn Laws and Navigation Acts in the 1840s, which wiped out the preferential markets so long enjoyed by the colonies in Britain, had left them floundering. They did not regain their footing until 1854, when a Reciprocity Treaty with the United States provided new buyers for their lumber and grain.

Britain's leaders seemed to be of two minds about the provinces. "Those wretched colonies will all be independent in a few years," said Disraeli in 1853, "and are a millstone round our necks." Still, the home government was initially unwilling to sponsor any moves towards British North American federation on the grounds that this would accelerate progress towards complete independence.

The colonists, too, seemed to want it both ways. They used their new powers of self-government to raise a high, protectionist tariff barrier against imports of manufactured goods, including imports from Britain. This action was particularly galling to those British politicians who had given Canada responsible government precisely to further the cause of free trade. Yet when the House of Commons resolved in 1862 that the colonies would have to take on part of their own defence burden, the Canadian provincial legislature rejected a proposal that it should train local militia.

While few colonists were interested in political union during the 1850s, many saw the value of closer economic ties, if only the colonies could be united by rail. Canadians and Maritimers alike had long envisioned an intercolonial railway which would connect the ice-free port of Halifax

Radical Jack, the Dictator of Canada



Lord Durham (right) is chiefly remembered as the author of the Durham Report, the colonial document that laid the foundations of a united, self-governing Canada. But Durham was not just a successful colonial administrator: he was a man quite out of the ordinary.

When he came of age in 1813, the life that stretched before him was a glittering highway, paved with gold and leading to almost certain fame. He had, as this portrait shows, dazzling good looks, even beauty, with which he charmed his way through a thousand Regency drawing-rooms. Till 1827 he was merely John Lambton, but he inherited from his landowning family a vast country estate in Durham with a race-course, a gas-lit castle and, beneath the rolling farmlands, thick coal-seams. His collieries earned him immense profits and the nick-name "King Jog" because he once foolishly remarked that "£40,000 a year was the sort of income a man could jog along on." He moved in the highest circles. He had an excellent mind, well trained at Eton; his integrity was absolute; and he was Whig M.P. for his county. His ambition, moreover, was enormous. With all this the post of Prime Minister might well have been within his grasp.

Instead he became a traitor to his class. In the political ferment after the French Revolution, he, like several landowners, championed electoral reform. His first great political achievement came in 1831. As Lord Privy Seal in the cabinet of his father-in-law, Earl Grey, he took charge of drafting the First Reform Bill. He had a genuine compassion for the oppressed, but his arrogant insistence on his own, far-reaching democratic remedies antagonized his fellow aristocrats. They labelled him "Radical Jack" and "The Angry Boy," and edged him out of politics. It was still 1831 when his parliamentary career came to an effective end.

In subsequent years, Whig leaders kept him abroad as much as possible, sending him twice on diplomatic missions to Russia and then, in 1838, to the Canadian colonies where the Papineau rebellion had provoked a constitutional crisis. The rebellion demanded firm handling, and Durham refused to go without full powers. London suspended the constitutions of the Canadian colonies and vested Durham with supreme authority. At 46 he had become a dictator, and he flaunted his power with unabashed extravagance. His report recommending representative government for Canada, when it was barely a reality in Britain, was the most radical colonial paper ever presented to Parliament.

with Montreal, and some dared to dream of a line stretching all the way across the plains to the Pacific. A dream it was; in 1850 there were only 66 miles of track in British North America.

Ten years later there were 2,000 miles. The Grand Trunk Railway's intercolonial line reached from the shores of Lake Huron to Rivière du Loup near the seaward end of the St. Lawrence, tantalizingly close to its goal, Halifax. There it halted. The Grand Trunk was in desperate financial trouble, and so was the government of Canada, which had guaranteed the loans the company had raised.

At this point an adroit English financial manipulator named Edward W. Watkin arrived on the scene. Neatly manipulating the logic of the situation, he transformed what appeared to be a barrier to provincial unity – the inability to finish the line – into a positive force for federation. Sent out by Baring Brothers, Canada's London bankers, to reorganize the Grand Trunk, Watkin soon perceived that if a railway, once built, could unite the provinces, then the provinces, once they were united, could build a railway.

Between 1861 and 1863 he developed a scheme for extending the line from coast to coast, a plan that created much excitement among colonial politicians and businessmen, and at the same time raised the hopes of the railroad's anxious London creditors. Simultaneously he pointed out that no one province by itself had the financial resources to back so titanic a project. Obviously some kind of federation would be necessary.

Watkin's proposal, appealing as it did to the desire for financial reward for past and future investors rather than to any idealistic motives, revived discussion of provincial union both in the colonies and in London. The British government, which liked the railway plan, hesitated over the political implications, but Watkin and his associates at Baring Brothers pushed ahead, using all their influence.

Meanwhile, the colonies were getting a strong – if unfriendly – shove towards union from their gigantic and troubled neighbour to the south. The United States had been threatening to revoke the Reciprocity Treaty, on which the prosperity of the British North American colonies depended, ever since Canadian tariffs on manufactured imports had gone up in the late 1850s. Clearly audible beneath the bitter diplomatic exchanges were repeated mutterings of the phrase, "Manifest Destiny," the magical phrase used by Americans to mean that God and history intended them eventually to occupy all North America.

The outbreak of civil war in the United States increased the tension. The British government, which still had control of its colonies' external affairs, refrained from expressing a clear preference for either the North or the South. But a number of incidents heightened tension with the North. After the U.S. Navy seized the British ship *Trent* at the end of 1861, the two countries teetered on the very brink of war. For the United States, the prize of war would be the North American colonies, where only 4,000 British troops were stationed. When reinforcements were rushed in to defend the Canadian frontier, the fact that they had to be transported from Halifax by sledge over snow-covered trails was a powerful argument for the completion of

Muffled to the ears, Canadian settlers race their sleds across a winter landscape. It was the fastest way of travelling in this vast new country of theirs.

the railway that was to link the colonies.

War fever abated but enmity continued to thrive. Angered by the use of British colonial ports by Confederate warships, and by a few isolated raids which rebel soldiers made from the Canadian side of the border, the American government in 1864 gave notice that the treaty for naval disarmament on the Great Lakes would be terminated and that henceforth Canadians would need passports to enter the United States. When the Civil War ended one year later these two plans were dropped, but a more potent one announced: the Reciprocity Treaty would definitely not be renewed at the expiration of its ten-year period.

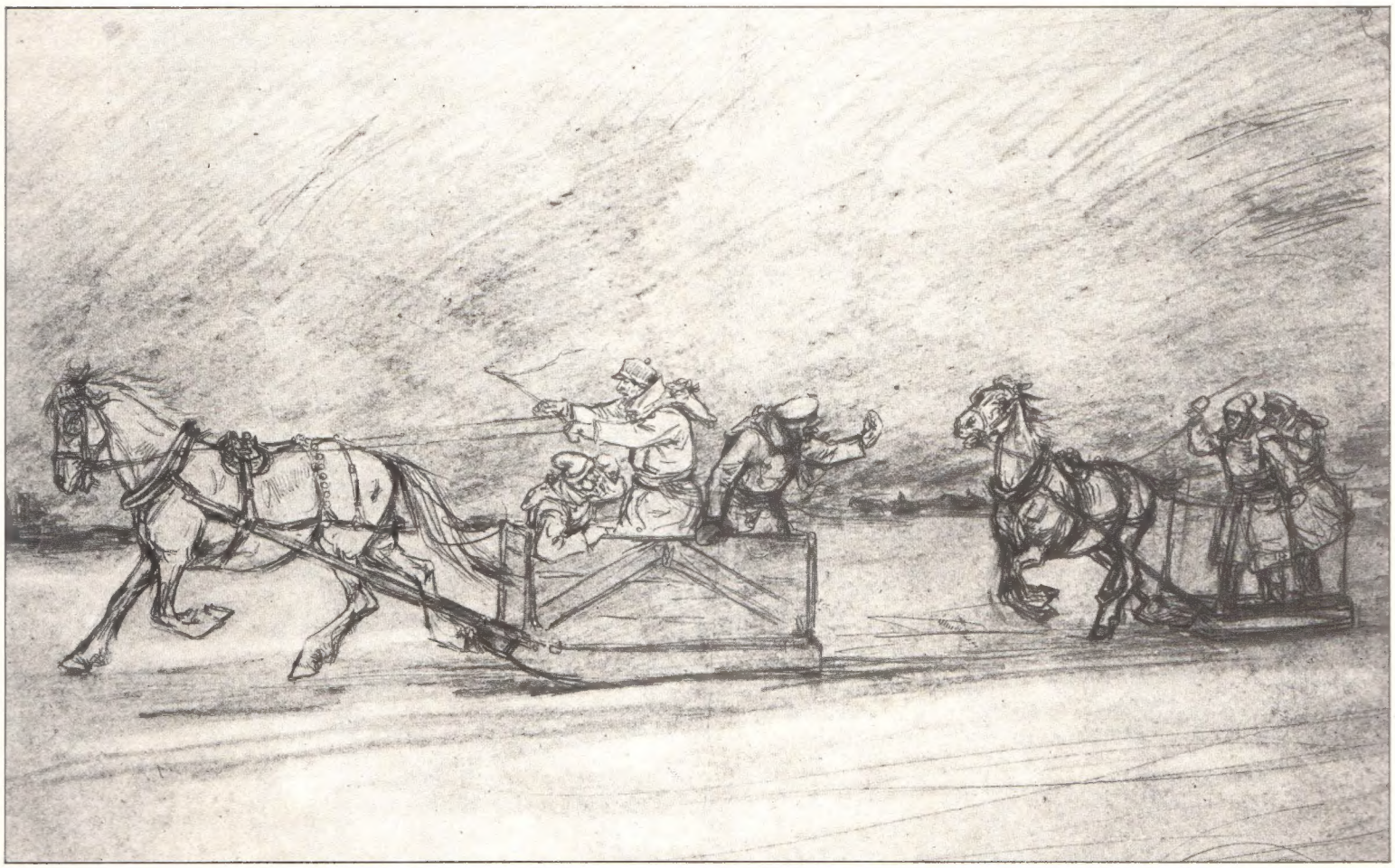
Even before the Reciprocity Treaty was refused renewal by Congress, threats from America, pressure on the North-West and Pacific territories by the U.S.'s land-hungry settlers, and Edward Watkin's persistent lobbying had caused a remarkable change in provincial opinion, about union of the Canadian colonies.

An eloquent speaker and committed confederationist named D'Arcy McGee, who toured Canada and the Maritimes in 1863, found audiences attentive to his pleas for "British American Nationality." At the end of that year the British cabinet, motivated by the deepening crisis in relations with the U.S. and urged on by London financiers interested in Watkin's project, reversed its position and advocated federation of the colonies. And in 1864, weary of a decade of political confusion and deadlock, Canada's leaders – Conservative John A. Macdonald, Reformer George Brown, and *Canadien* Georges Cartier – agreed to set aside their traditional antagonisms, form a coalition government and seek federation.

This coalition, led by Macdonald, assumed the primary responsibility for awakening the long-dormant project and keeping it on the move towards a successful conclusion. Although 25 years had passed since Lord Durham had first proposed a union of the colonies in his report, these men now began to work with solemn dedication to produce rapid results.

They found a ready-made platform from which to launch their campaign: the three Maritime Provinces, to satisfy their British-appointed Governors as much as to capitalize on the rising local interest in the subject, had agreed to a meeting that autumn to discuss a possible regional federation. Because of the continuing local rivalries, few expected that very much would be accomplished by the conference, and neither a time nor a place had been settled when in July Macdonald's group sent polite letters asking if a Canadian delegation could attend to discuss a plan for wider union. The Maritimers consented, provided the visit was unofficial.

After two months of studious but frantic preparation, Macdonald, Cartier, Brown and A.T.Galt, a long-time advocate of federation, steamed down the St. Lawrence on the Canadian government ship, *Queen Victoria*, to Prince Edward Island. The welcome they received at Charlottetown on September 1 must have given them some anxiety for the fate of their bold proposals. One lone provincial official, handling the oars himself, rowed out to meet them. His explanation was hardly reassuring: the Nova Scotians, New Brunswickers and his own government were at the circus.



The conference that was to lead to the founding of a new nation was decidedly not the prime attraction on Prince Edward Island that week. A newspaper correspondent arriving to report on the meeting asked a crowd surging along the high street where they were bound. "The circus, Sir, the circus." It was the first circus to visit the island in 21 years, and because of it, there was no room in Charlottetown's hotels for the Canadian delegates. They would have to sleep on their steamer.

If the reception momentarily destroyed their confidence, Macdonald and his colleagues were surely rejuvenated by one propitious bit of news they received that first morning. The Maritime conference, barely convened in its first session when it heard the Canadians were nearing the island, had broken off to await their arrival. It had voted unanimously to delay any discussion of Maritime union until it heard the unofficial visitors from the West describe their grander plan.

At times the conference had the appearance of a two-week-long outing for the boys from the provincial legislatures. One convivial lunch for all 33 delegates aboard the *Queen Victoria* lasted from three in the afternoon well into the night.

But there were serious business sessions, too, as the Canadians hammered away at the Maritime delegates on the advantages of a united British North America. Talk progressed well past the general concept to the specific sort of union that MacDonald envisaged. He wanted a powerful central government in order to "avoid the mistakes of our neighbours," a pointed reference to the American Civil War then raging to the south, which he knew would help to convince men who might otherwise be inclined towards a looser confederation. "If we can only attain that object – a vigorous general government – we shall not be New Brunswickers, nor Nova Scotians, nor Canadians, but British Americans, under the sway of the British sovereign."

The last phrase was important. There was no question of cutting the imperial ties. Macdonald called for "a great British Monarchy, in connection with the British Empire, and under the British Queen."

The Canadians, who for all their enthusiasm had left Quebec with no inkling of whether they would be successful, were elated by the response. The Maritimers shelved the project for regional federation, and convened a conference of all British North American colonies at Quebec in October, to discuss union in greater detail.

Sir John A. Macdonald, first Dominion Premier, was the Disraeli of Canada and strangely similar in looks. Conservative in politics, he was a firm believer in Empire.

Georges Etienne Cartier, leader of French-speaking Canadians, worked with Macdonald to unify Canada through political federation and ambitious railway-building.

Macdonald could hardly contain himself: "There may be obstructions," he said, "local prejudices may arise, disputes may occur, local jealousies may intervene, but it matters not – the wheel is now revolving and we are only the fly on the wheel; we cannot delay it – the union of the colonies of British America under the Sovereign is a fixed fact."

When the meeting took place, its deliberations were secret, but if there were "obstructions" they must have been quickly dealt with. In less than three weeks the Quebec Conference passed a series of 72 resolutions – the Quebec Resolutions – which covered every aspect of government in such detail that, if Parliament and the provincial legislatures approved them, little more than a change of title on the first page would transform these declarations into a constitution.

To the dismay of the scheme's advocates, it was not to be that simple. In March of 1865 the voters of New Brunswick threw out their government for its advocacy of federation. Prince Edward Island rejected the scheme. Newfoundland's legislature decided in 1866 to bide its time for a while; it was to bide it for 83 years. Only in Canada, where the coalition government was able to override all objections, did federation win approval.

Neither the British government, which was now positively eager for a colonial union to which it could shift some of the expenses of North American defence, nor the railway-builders and their bankers would let a little thing like provincial public opinion stand in their way. For all the financial and political pressure they applied, however, it was the Americans who pushed the recalcitrant colonists into the fold.

The United States had won its Civil War and now possessed the world's largest army, which enhanced the ominousness of remarks made by men as eminent as Secretary of State W.H. Seward who declaimed: "I know that

Nature designs this whole continent, not merely these thirty-six states, shall be, sooner or later, within the magic circle of the American Union." In 1866 Congress made good its pledge to terminate the Reciprocity Treaty. It was in that same year that the Fenians raided Niagara in their petty effort to establish an anti-British base in Canada and then camped on the border of New Brunswick. Despite its ignominious failure, the raid sent shivers of fear through New Brunswick's populace.

The threat from the south suddenly acquired a new reality. It was enough. At the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, in December, 1866, delegates from New Brunswick (which had restored the pro-federation party to power), Nova Scotia and Canada approved a final revision of the scheme. Their London Resolutions were written into law as the British North America Act, which in March of 1867 was approved by Parliament as apathetically, said Macdonald with umbrage, as "a private bill uniting two or three English parishes."

The Act provided the strong central government Macdonald wanted by enumerating 16 specific areas in which the provinces could legislate; all other powers were reserved to the federal legislature, divided into equivalents of the upper and lower houses of Britain's Parliament. It broke Canada once again into its original French and English components, now called Quebec and Ontario. It required the new federal government to move immediately to complete the intercolonial railway. And it provided for the later entry into the union of other British North American colonies.

Finally, the new nation's name: it would be Canada, but what kind of Canada? Macdonald, underscoring again his loyalty to the Crown, wished to call it the "Kingdom of Canada," but it was feared this might offend the "republican susceptibilities of the Yankees." S.L. Tilley of New Brunswick, it was said, was handed the solution by the Almighty during the London Conference when he attended a service in Westminster Abbey to escape the arguments of delegates and heard the 72nd Psalm: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

Thus the Act directed that the three old provinces "shall form and be one dominion." On July 1, 1867, the Dominion of Canada was born.

"We are all merely provincial politicians at present," said Sir John A. Macdonald, the first Prime Minister of the new Dominion of Canada. "Perhaps by and by some of us will rise to the level of national statesmen." His critics would have said that he at least would never achieve such heights. "He at times raised opportunism," said one, "almost to the level of a political principle." Perhaps so; he had learned his politics in the old Province of Canada where it was a notable achievement for an administration simply to stay in office, and he knew well the strategems of ruse, surprise and compromise on which survival depended.

But he had already confounded those who judged him a party hack by his masterful management of federation. He had been knighted for his role as the union's chief architect. Now he was ready to belie his carefree, often boyish, and sometimes downright dissolute behaviour by manfully accepting the responsibility for guiding, defending, and – God, Parliament, and the Hudson's Bay Company willing – enlarging his new nation.

His first task was to subdue the anti-federation temper of Nova Scotia, which province had been bundled into the union although there had been a strong anti-federation sentiment among its people. In this, the British government supported him. It twice rejected pleas from Nova Scotia to be allowed to secede. Macdonald used the always popular political tradition of governmental largesse to secure from the federal government a larger annual subsidy for Nova Scotia than it was originally scheduled to receive, and he found a post in the Dominion cabinet for Joseph Howe, the leader of the province's anti-union movement. With these acts he deflated the opposition with neatness and despatch.

Macdonald and Canada faced bigger problems than merely pacifying a stubborn province. President U.S. Grant of the United States and his Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, were liberally lacing their speeches with references to "Manifest Destiny." The proposals were far from subtle. The Taylor Bill of 1866, for instance, actually laid down procedures for annexing the whole of present-day Canada to the States. America's most covetous glances were towards the Hudson's Bay Company's great unpeopled West, which the Dominion considered its own rightful legacy. To secure it, the would-be heir moved quickly and firmly.

"We hope to close our session this week," the Prime Minister wrote in June of 1869, "and a very momentous session it has been. We have quietly and almost without observation annexed all the territory between here and the Rocky Mountains." The Hudson's Bay Company was being compelled to surrender both Rupert's Land and its rights in the North-West Territory to the Crown, which would then hand them over to Canada. Considering that a generous Charles II had made a free grant of the land, and that the Company had reaped millions of pounds from it over two centuries, it was well compensated. It was to receive £300,000 to be paid by Canada, would retain 45,000 acres round its forts, and could claim up to one-twentieth of the remaining fertile land.

As this enormous property transaction was being speedily arranged, no one – neither the Canadian government nor the Company – bothered to ask the Métis, the French-Indian inhabitants of the region, their opinion, or even to inform them what was happening. The Métis were understandably alarmed when Canadian surveyors began sighting their transits across the Red River homesteads, which the Métis had been cultivating for years.

Angry Métis, fearing not only for their lands but for their half-nomadic, buffalo-hunting existence, stood on the surveyor's chains and threatened violence. Colonel J.S. Dennis, in charge of the surveys, suggested to Ottawa that the work be discontinued in view of "the present temper of the half-breeds." He was told to get on with it.

Appropriately, the Minister of Public Works who ignored that warning was one of the first to suffer the consequences. Appointed to govern the territory, William McDougall set out for his new domain several months in advance of its scheduled transfer to the Dominion. With

a party of government officers-to-be, he arrived at the border town of Pembina on October 21, 1869, to find the road blocked by a barricade and 40 armed horsemen, who warned him not to enter Red River without permission from the "Comité National de Métis."

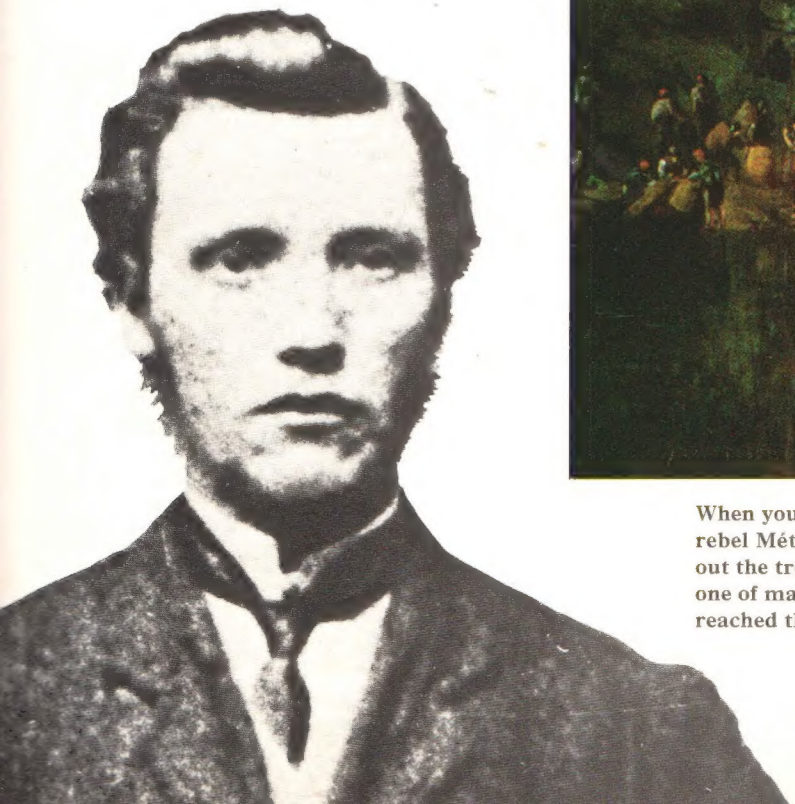
The man who assumed leadership of this rebellion was 25-year-old Louis Riel. He had studied classics at the College of Montreal. He had a quick temper and a taste for popular adulation, but it seems unlikely that he was – as some Canadians insisted – of unsound mind; his actions are more probably attributable to intense patriotism rather than insanity.

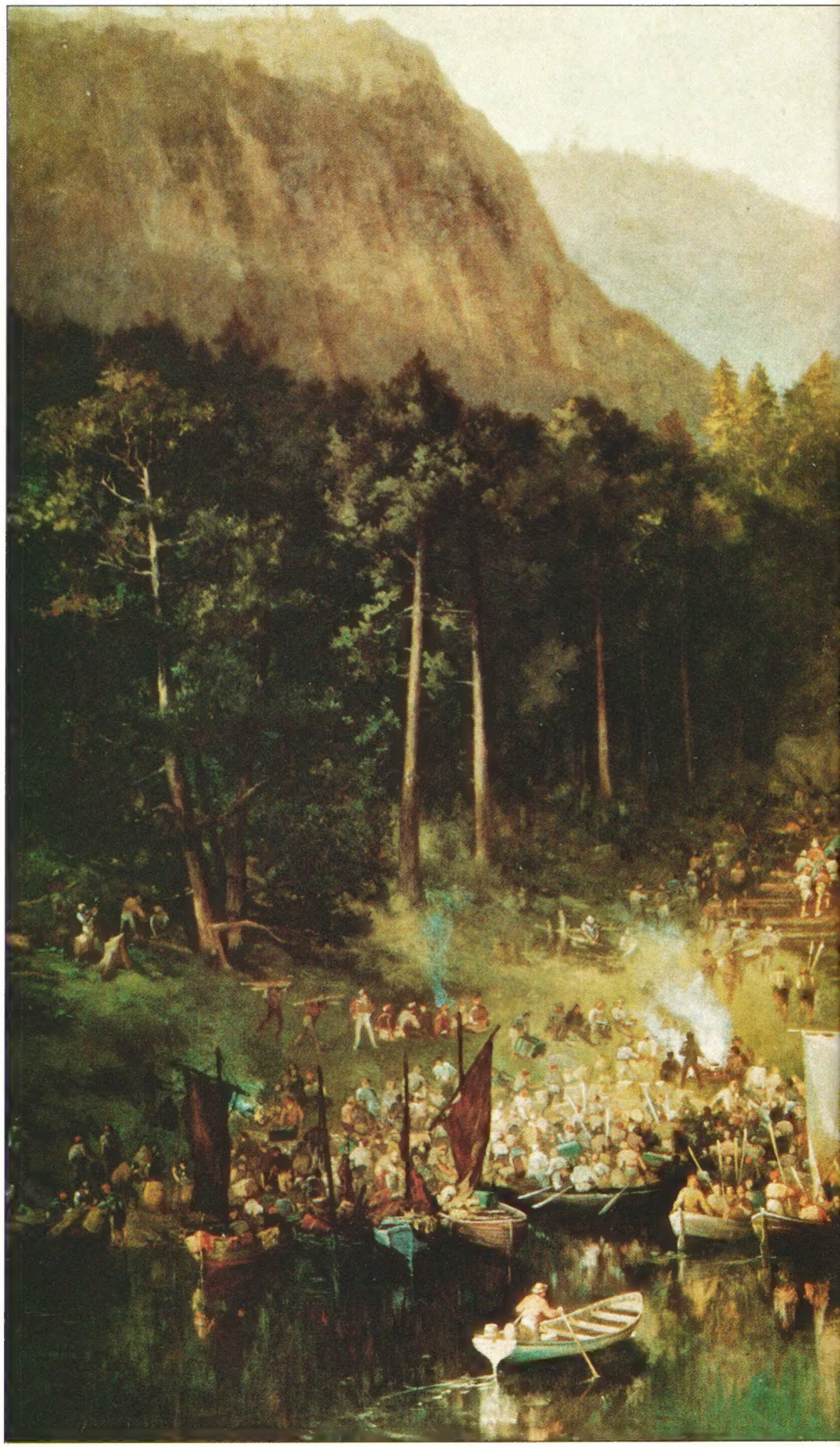
Riel soon gathered about him some 500 armed and strictly disciplined Métis guerrillas. On November 2 they took over Fort Garry, the Company's headquarters and strategic centre of the colony, and began trying to get other settlers to help create a provisional government.

It was a blow for Macdonald. With winter closing in, it was too late to send a military expedition, and any less than completely successful attempt to put down the rebels could result in the kind of inconclusive violence that would give Americans an excuse to intervene. Indeed, W.B.O'Donoghue, an American who had strong sympathies with the Fenians, was the Treasurer of Louis Riel's provisional government.

If Canada could not install a Governor in a new territory its weakness "would be painfully exhibited, not only to the people of Red River, but to the people and Government of the United States." Macdonald's opportunism did not fail him. He found a bolt-hole.

"We have thrown the responsibility on the Imperial Government," he wrote to his beleaguered Governor in December. On the first day of that month, Canada





When young Thomas Scott (left) was killed in 1870 by the rebel Métis of the Red River colony, the government sent out the troops. They are seen above, dragging boats over one of many laboriously built portages. By the time they reached the trouble-spot, the uprising had ended.

was to have paid the Hudson's Bay Company its £300,000 and the Colonial Office was to have proclaimed the transfer of the territory of Canada. But a careful reading of the contract indicated to Macdonald's law-trained eye that nothing *compelled* Canada to take delivery at any particular time. A week before the deadline, like a prospective house purchaser insisting on vacant possession, Macdonald wired London: "Canada cannot accept North-West until peaceable possession can be given." He told Canada's London agent to withhold payment of the money.

Lord Granville, the Colonial Secretary, was astonished. "Government by Company has become impossible," he cabled. "Government by Canada only alternative and ought to be established promptly." But Macdonald was not about to put the Dominion at the mercy of some rebels and "their Yankee wire-pullers." He was adamant. "Our case," he said, "is unassailable." Granville retreated from his earlier position and conceded that the territory remained the problem of the Company and the imperial government in London.

Politically, it was still a very big problem for Macdonald. Sympathy for the Métis ran strong among French-Canadians who demanded peaceful negotiations with the rebels. Donald Smith, a Company official, went to Red River at the end of December and managed to convince the settlers to send a delegation to Ottawa. But he could not prevent Riel from executing in March, 1870, a young English Canadian, Thomas Scott, who had been involved in two armed attempts to overthrow the provisional government. "We must make Canada respect us," said Riel.

Scott's death was Riel's worst mistake and made Macdonald's task doubly difficult. Ontario's English Canadians howled for tough reprisals; now there almost certainly would have to be a military expedition. Quebec's Frenchmen denied force was necessary and insisted that negotiations continue.

Macdonald, a veteran tightrope walker, did both things. He would yield to Red River's demands to be taken into the Dominion as a federal province rather than a non-self-governing territory, but he would send troops as well. "We are nearly through with our troubles with the delegates," he wrote optimistically to the Governor-General in April, "and then we can take up the military matter."

The scenery was an acknowledged feature of the railway, and in the mountains passengers crowded on to the platform of the observation car.

On the insignia of the C.P.R. crouched a beaver, prized pelt of the early fur-traders and source of Canada's first wealth.

Railwaymen proudly pose by one of the first engines sent from Britain. An ace driver on the C.P.R. earned $200 a month in the 1890s, more than many a Canadian supreme court judge.

Canada did not become a nation till the Canadian Pacific Railway's last spike was driven home. Before that symbolic event took place on a wet November morning in 1885, the country was like a skeleton without a spinal column. Once completed, the line joined remote settlements scattered across mountains and prairies into one body politic. British Columbia, previously a severed limb on the Pacific coast, was linked to the nerve-centre of government in Ottawa. Far-away trouble-spots could now be reached in days, not months. The railway had unified Canada, spanning 2,700 miles from Atlantic to Pacific in an engineering feat that was a worthy monument of nationhood.

N°4

A Whistle in the Rockies

For over 30 years it was the dream of Canada's railway politicians to hear the whistle of a steam-engine in the Rocky Mountains and to travel from Halifax on the Atlantic to Vancouver on the Pacific within a week. Once the Canadian Pacific Railway Company won the government contract in 1880, the dream came true with astonishing speed.

An army of 40,000 men went to work. Gangs sweated all night. Blasting through the shield of Pre-Cambrian rock north of the Great Lakes, hammering across the dry plains, scattering the buffalo, the railway advanced westwards through Medicine Hat, Calgary and Kicking Horse Pass 5,300 feet up in the Rockies, down the Fraser River, to Vancouver. Often it was being built faster than money could be found to pay for it. Yet despite crises of cash and politics, it was finished in five years – half the specified time.

High in the Rocky Mountains lay Rogers Pass, a crucial part of the route whose discovery in 1882 was a break-through for the company, since it made a costly tunnel unnecessary.

George Stephen, C.P.R. president, pledged all he owned to get the railway line built.

Engineer Van Horne had the work "done right" and sent the bills to Stephen.

All wooden viaducts – "trestles" – gave heart-rending creaks; this one, acquired from the government, urgently needed strengthening.

The velocipede was vital equipment on the railway. It patrolled the lines in front of the trains, checking for landslides or dislodged boulders.

Stretching into the shimmer of the far distance, the railway creeps on across the seemingly endless expanses of Canada, through the lowlands of British Columbia to the Pacific.

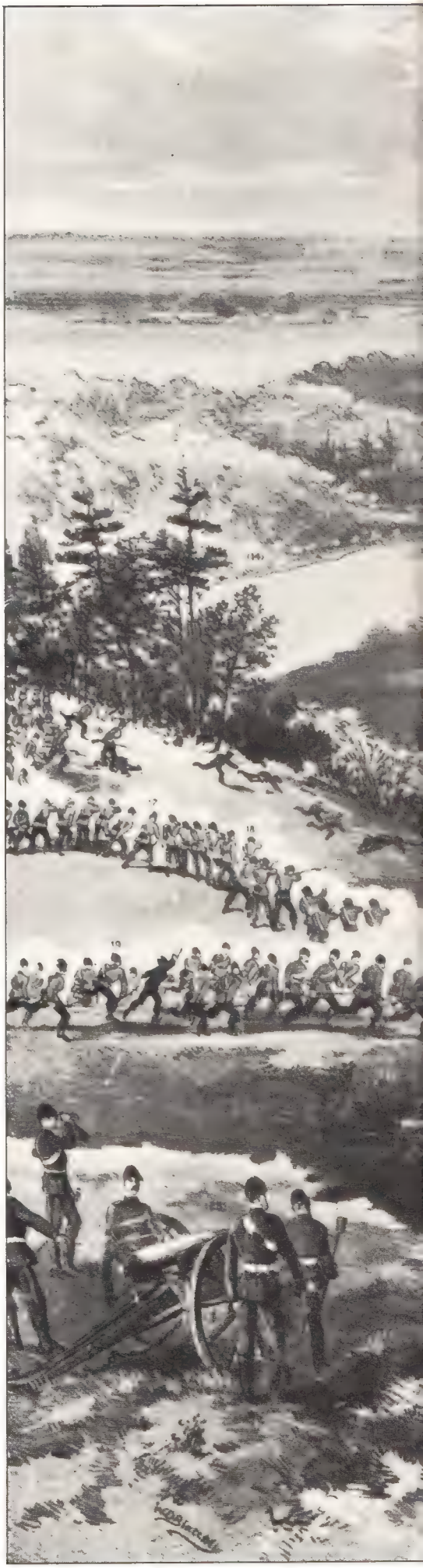
A Victory for the C.P.R.

The first passengers on the still unfinished Canadian Pacific Railway were 5,000 militiamen, whose Snider-Enfield rifles scraped the inlaid panelling of the brand-new carriages. That was in spring 1885, when the second Riel rebellion broke out deep in the prairies. The troops, despite an uncompleted section of track, arrived on the scene in a few days. (In 1870, during the first Riel rebellion, the journey had taken three months.) The rebels' rapid defeat was the transcontinental railway's first great victory.

Its second great victory was journalistic. In July, 1886, as the first scheduled Atlantic Express pulled out of Vancouver, a correspondent for Empire newspapers sat at a rosewood writing-table, pen poised to record every detail of scenery along "The Queen's Highway." Others followed, and soon there was a spate of Victorian travelogues about the C.P.R. They spoke of the sage-green velvet sofas, the frock-coated passengers and tomato ketchup in the dining-cars, of sipping delicious Java coffee through country that was like "Scotland on the scale of a continent." It was good publicity, and an important factor in opening up Canada to a flood of immigrants.

Louis Riel led the Métis into rebellion in a last stand against white expansion.

Troops make a forced march the easy way on their mission into the prairies to crush Riel.



Troops still fresh after their train journey storm down into the rebel headquarters of Batoche. On May 15, 1885, Riel admitted defeat and surrendered.

II. The Welding of the Nation

The strain of the crisis sparked by Riel told on Macdonald. Shortly before troops – led by the epitome of British generalship, Garnet Wolseley – departed for Red River, the Prime Minister went on one of his justly famous drinking-bouts, swaying through the House of Commons bar and lurching in and out of Ottawa's hotels for an entire weekend. "Bad news," the word spread, "Sir John A. has broken out again." But on Monday he was in the House explaining the Bill that would make Red River, to be called Manitoba, a province. Although bleary-eyed, he was convincing. The measure passed by 120 votes to 11 the following week.

The expedition that left at about the same time included a strong complement of British regulars to impress the United States with the Empire's continued commitment to Canada. Sir John had worked hard to get the regulars assigned to this task. When they arrived at Fort Garry on August 24, there was no fight. Riel had already disbanded his army and prepared his government for a peaceful transfer of power.

Having been warned that his own life was in danger, he slipped out of the back gate when the troops arrived at the front. Riel went across the U.S. border to Montana and became a school-teacher. But Canada had not seen the last of him.

In the years of peace that followed the rebellion, Macdonald began to realize some of his ambitions for the young country. The creation of Manitoba and the acquisition of the North-West Territories was followed by British Columbia's entry to Dominion in 1871 and Prince Edward Island's in 1873. The prophetic psalm had been fulfilled; Canada now stretched from sea to sea.

A new treaty with America failed to provide the access for Canadian products to that country's markets which Macdonald sought. but it did seem to ease tension between the two nations and end the threats to Canada's territory. Even the Fenians subsided.

The most pressing unfinished business was the railway. The intercontinental line from Halifax to the Great Lakes was under way and would be completed in 1876. But Canada now reached to the Pacific, long the goal of its railway-builders, and British Columbia had been promised, in return for its agreement to join the federation, that a transcontinental line would be begun within two years and finished within a decade.

Sir Hugh Allan, a financier and steamship proprietor of impeccable reputation, desperately wanted the contract to build the line – so desperately, it seems, that he was willing to become peccable to get it. He was at first allied with an American syndicate. Foreign control of their dream-railway was something Canada's politicians could not countenance, despite the fact that Allan quietly supplied $160,000 for the 1872 election campaigns of Macdonald, Cartier and some other leaders.

Allan dutifully dropped his American connections and in 1873 was awarded the Pacific Charter by Macdonald's government. His erstwhile partners, unhappy about being left out, consoled themselves by leaking accounts of his election contributions to the opposition, which swiftly confronted Macdonald with the exposure. At about the same time a clerk in the office of Allan's solicitor stole and passed on some letters he had written to the Americans. The result was a first-rate scandal – the Pacific Scandal of 1873.

Macdonald himself called for an investigative commission, which only served to delay the inevitable. After its report was delivered in October he addressed the House for five solid hours in his own defence. His colleagues were moved, but could not ignore the fact that a man who had donated large sums to the Prime Minister's campaign was the next year awarded the biggest contract in the history of Canada. The government fell on a vote of no confidence and Liberal Alexander Mackenzie became Canada's second Prime Minister.

Coincidentally, the country slumped into an economic depression. Allan found that it was impossible for him to raise the money he needed to start construction of the railway and had to give up his charter. In an effort to do something about the transcontinental linkup, Macdonald put forward a muddled scheme that envisaged a combined rail-and-water route across the country. But the government was also short of cash and in the next five years only a few hundred miles of track were laid. The grand vision of a Dominion welded together by steel seemed to have been forgotten.

British Columbia was becoming impatient about the fulfilment of the promise that had been made to complete the rail link. When the Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, visited Vancouver, he was given a sharp reminder of the restive spirit of the Canadians on the Pacific coast: during a ceremonial procession he encountered a horse wearing a blanket inscribed, "Good, but not iron" – meaning that the "iron horses" of the railroad were still wanting. And the parade route had to be altered to avoid a ceremonial arch which recalled the pledge to build the railway with the words, "Carnarvon terms or separation."

Then, on a platform which promised high tariffs and an energetic railway policy, Sir John was resurrected. Whether or not it was due to his protectionist programme, Canada did experience a brief resurgence of economic confidence after his election. By 1880 it was healthy enough to get on with the railroad. After thorough examination of several proposals – Macdonald feared another scandal – a contract was awarded to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.

The company's president was George Stephen, a carpenter's son from Banffshire and former draper's apprentice who was now president of a Montreal bank. Lately he had dabbled in American railroads. His cousin, Donald Smith – the same Donald Smith who had played a significant role for the government during the Red River rebellion – was the company's other chief capitalist. His name did not appear on the contract, a fact perhaps related to his having cast his influential vote against Macdonald at the time of the 1873 scandal.

Stephen needed an engineer of exceptional talent, experience and will to drive the line across the continent. He selected an American, William Cornelius Van Horne. "Van Horne can do it," a friend told him, "but he will take all authority he gets and more; so define how much you want him to have." Stephen made him general manager with wide authority.

On first inspection, the contract appeared extremely generous. The company would get 25 million acres along the line, a subsidy of $25,000,000, and the

700 miles of railway already built.

The deal soon turned out to be not so good after all. The project was a money-eater from the start, and decisions made for political rather than engineering reasons made it ever more voracious. It would have been easy to hook up with an American line for a route south of Lake Superior, but to make the railway all-Canadian the builders had to pierce the Pre-Cambrian Shield north of the lake.

The company was using so much dynamite blasting through the hard Laurentian rock that it had to build three factories of its own to supply the explosive. Van Horne employed every known technique and invented some new ones. Where rock could not be levelled down, he levelled it up, filling whole gorges with crushed stone to carry the rails. He imported a rapid track-laying machine from America, but still needed 12,000 men and 5,000 horses to complete the section. It cost half a million dollars a mile. The cash subsidy from the government, which had seemed so large, was quickly used up.

The company still had its 25 million acres, which, with the coming of the rails, should have skyrocketed in value. Weather and commerce, however, can be as cruel to capitalists as to farmers. In 1883 an early autumn frost wiped out a year's wheat crop in western Canada. It was the beginning of a depression that was to last until the end of the century. Land prices plummeted.

"Stephen did more work and worked harder than I did," Van Horne said years later. "I had only to build the road, but Stephen had to find the money." It was hard to come by. By 1884 the company was near bankruptcy. Stephen had no choice but to ask the government for a loan – $22,500,000, almost as much as the original subsidy and astronomical for a country with such a small population. But Macdonald wanted the railway and Canada needed it: the loan was made.

The infusion kept construction going for only a year before Stephen was compelled to ask for more help. This time Macdonald hesitated. His government was having enough trouble riding out the economic crisis which was pervading every area of Canadian business and industry. He was not sure it could afford the political embarrassment of bailing out the Canadian Pacific again. "However docile our majority," he said, "we dare not ask for another loan. How it will end I don't know."

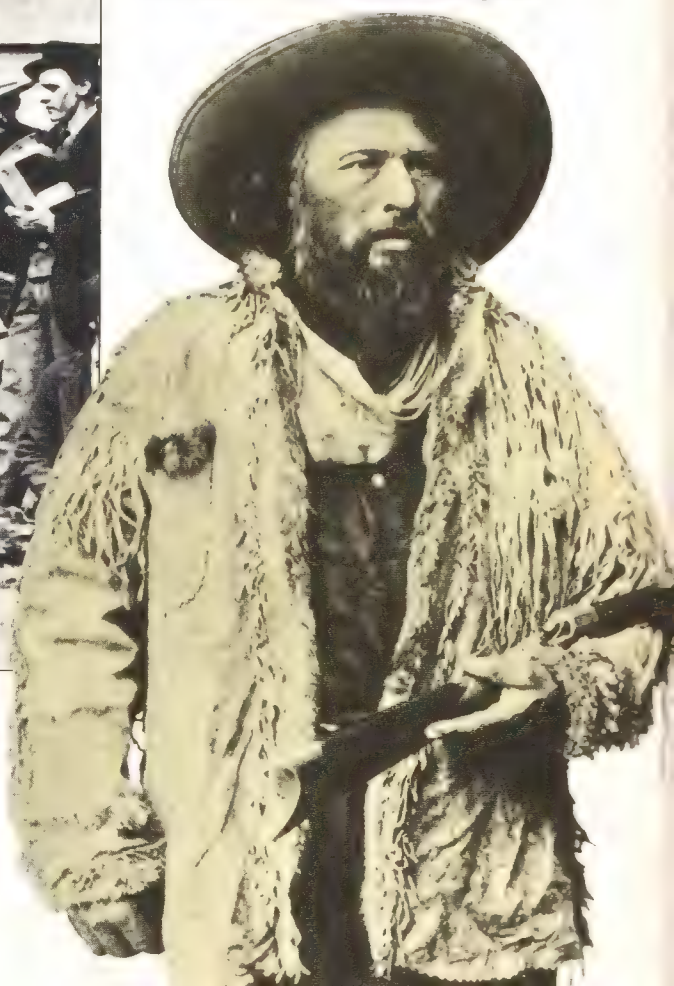
Stephen begged. "The object of the present application is to save the *life* of the company," he said. "If the government does not help us, we are finished." He was not overstating the case. Van Horne wired him from the field that the wages truck could not leave on its rounds: there was nothing to put in it. Macdonald, the patient opportunist and never one to make an unpleasant decision until it was absolutely necessary, did not turn the company down, but stalled.

Opportunity came. And as so often happened during his long career, it appeared in the form of another problem, this time an old one come back to haunt him. Louis Riel was in Canada again, and the Métis had risen.

To escape the unfamiliar civilization that provincial status had imposed on Manitoba, many of the Métis had sold the 240-acre farms that the government granted them in the Red River Valley and moved west to Saskatchewan. Settling along the Saskatchewan Rivers, they followed their old French practice and staked out oblong claims that ran in strips away from the water's edge.

Indians and Métis at Fort Pitt sell traders the buffalo hides on which their livelihood depended. By 1885, white encroachment had destroyed the herds, and there was rebellion that year in the prairies.

Gabriel Dumont became the Métis's leader after the surrender of Louis Riel, and he fought on until all hope was gone.



Civilization had caught up with them again. The buffalo had disappeared, slaughtered by the skin-hunters; white farmers were moving in, sometimes claiming parts of Métis farms for themselves. Now those harbingers of dispossession, the surveyors, had come on to the scene, this time marking out the line for the railway without any regard for the homesteads it would cross. In 1884 the Métis selected four delegates and raised enough money to buy four tickets to Montana and five back. Louis Riel agreed to come.

At first he attempted to win redress for the Métis by legal means, but the government at the Dominion capital in Ottawa ignored his petitions. Riel wanted – or said he wanted – to return to Montana and school-teaching. His people begged him to stay. Early in 1885, he organized a provisional government.

Perhaps Riel did not realize how much the North-West had changed since his 1869–70 rebellion. There was one new element which made it particularly different: the North-West Mounted Police. This force had been established in 1873 to extend Canadian law and authority to the western plains where the Métis, among many others, lived. The rebels would not necessarily be defeated by the thinly spread Mounties, but the presence of this force meant that Riel could not control the country without a clash, and a clash would surely bring a strong response from Ottawa.

The clash took place near Duck Lake on March 26, 1885. Hearing that a party of rebels was in the neighbourhood and eager for a "picnic," Superintendent L.N.F. Crozier rode out of Fort Carlton with 53 Mounties, 41 soldiers, and a seven-pounder cannon. When he found the Métis they appeared to want to parley; he went forward with an interpreter. As he advanced, he noticed rebels moving on the flanks of his party and was convinced it was a trap. "Fire away, boys!" he shouted suddenly, and the two rebels coming towards him – perhaps truly wanting only to talk? – fell, dead.

As firing became general, Crozier quickly saw his position was untenable. Because of his own troop deployment the cannon could not be used effectively, and anyway it jammed after several shots. After half an hour, he gave the order to retreat. Twelve of his men were killed and 11 wounded. They would all have died but for Louis Riel, who had observed the battle armed only with crucifix. He stopped the rebels from pursuing the shattered force, which could have been annihilated as it dragged itself to the fort leaving a trail of blood on the snow.

This event, viewed by some Canadians as a "massacre," was followed by a real one. Like the Métis, the North-West's Indians, herded into reserves to make room for white settlers and left there to starve when the buffalo vanished, were increasingly discontented. A group of Crees at the Hudson's Bay Company post of Frog Lake, stirred by the news of the Duck Lake encounter, appeared in war-paint on the morning of April 2 and murdered nine people.

The Mounties abandoned Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt, retiring to Battleford where all whites in the territory poured into the stockades for refuge. In Ottawa, Macdonald heard of the Duck Lake incident by wire the day after it occurred. He wanted to get a large military force into the area quickly. The unfinished railway was the obvious means. Could the quelling of the rebellion help the railway?

Van Horne was thinking the same thoughts. It would be difficult. The troops would have to march over stretches where no tracks yet existed, and much of their journey would be by open flatcars. But it could be done. He already had engines waiting with steam up and commissary arrangements under way before receiving the government's orders to move General Frederick Middleton and 5,000 Canadian militiamen to Saskatchewan. Within a week the first of three striking columns detrained at Qu'Appelle and marched north towards Batoche, Riel's H.Q. In 1870 it had taken Garnet Wolseley three months to reach Red River.

John Bull grins broadly as "Young Canada," healthy and confident after crushing the second Riel rebellion, unceremoniously kicks out interfering old Uncle Sam.

With such overwhelming force on the scene so quickly, the government soon triumphed. Battleford was relieved, Riel gave himself up on May 15; the Crees were captured on July 2.

The House of Commons knew the victory had been the railway's as much as the militia's. It approved Macdonald's proposal for the Canadian Pacific to issue $35,000,000 in new stock, $20,000,000 of it to be guaranteed by the government.

In July, Riel was convicted of high treason and sentenced to death. French Canada clamoured for remission of his sentence. Many thought he was insane, and should be locked away in an asylum rather than hanged. Macdonald saw to it that Riel was examined by doctors, who reported that he was capable of distinguishing right from wrong, which was the legal definition of sanity. That was good enough for Sir John. "He shall die," he said, "though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour."

On November 7, 1885, at a place called Craigellachie, Donald Smith drove the last spike of the transcontinental railway – a good iron spike, said Van Horne in a slighting reference to the flamboyance of the gold spike with which the American transcontinental railway was completed, "and anyone who wants to see it driven will have to pay full fare." Canada was no longer a "geographical expression." Nine days later, at the Police Barracks in Regina, Louis Riel was hanged.

Probably the most important election in John Macdonald's life was his last one. The year was 1891. Canada was 23 years old, and troubled. The Great Depression which had arrived unannounced in 1883 seemed to have settled in to stay for ever. The wheels of industry in the East turned more and more slowly and the prairies in the West stayed empty of farmers. Racial and religious ill-will abounded; French and English Canadians accused each other of destroying the nation's unity by seeking privilege, and in Quebec a strongly Nationalist premier had ruled the province for four years.

Macdonald still believed in his policies of national self-dependence, but it was not clear how many others did. The country had expanded to fill the whole width of the continent, the rails which provided an east–west axis were there,

As pamphlets like this appeared, Canada's last frontier was opened up – by Americans.

and the high tariff wall that inhibited the flow of goods from – and thus dependence on – the United States was still firm. But something was not working.

Seizing on the growing discontent, the Liberal Party announced that it was ready to try another course of action. Under the leadership of Wilfrid Laurier, it committed itself to a policy of Unrestricted Reciprocity with the United States. If approved by the electorate, this would be an abrupt and dramatic shift from the direction in which Macdonald had so long led the nation.

If Laurier won, culturally and commercially, Canada would pivot as if a giant hand had turned the top half of the North American continent by 90 degrees. With Unrestricted Reciprocity, there would be little need for the east–west Canadian Pacific railway. The flow of goods would be principally north–south, as each section of the country oriented itself to the nearest regional centre across the border in the United States. Canada's own economic identity would be lost as she fragmented into a line of satellites held fast to the U.S. by the power of commercial gravity. It was nothing less than a prelude to annexation. Or so Macdonald believed, and so he told the Canadian people during the winter campaign of 1891.

The people believed him. Their sense of self-preservation alerted, they rejected the Liberals and Unrestricted Reciprocity and put Macdonald's party back into the House it had ruled, with one short hiatus, since 1867. But the founder of the nation was shattered by the hard fight. He collapsed a week before the election, never recovered sufficiently to take office, and died six months later, at the age of 76. His monument cites his allegiance to Empire: "A British subject I was born, a British subject I will die."

If the Conservative victory actually saved the nation from some awful fate, it did not seem to improve the fate they were already suffering. The business slump continued and the racial antagonism became more acrimonious. The next election, in 1896, was fought almost entirely over an English-French, Protestant-Catholic issue, and the Conservatives were turned out for trying to protect the "right" of Manitoba Catholics to have sectarian state schools.

The new Liberal government did not mention its now-discarded programme for free trade with the States. Canada's basic policies remained unchanged. But the state of Canada changed remarkably. Conservatives credited the improvement to the old programmes finally having their effect. It is possible that the explanation lies nearer to world-wide economic and social trends. Whatever the cause, Canada under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, her first French-speaking Prime Minister, enjoyed the most prosperous decade she had had in her short history.

GOLD RUSH TO THE KLONDIKE

One of history's weirdest human migrations reached its climax in the winter of 1897–98. Gold had been discovered in the frozen wilderness of Canada's far North-West where, to become rich, men had to suffer appallingly. In the rush to the gold-fields clustered round the Klondike River, 100,000 "tenderfeet" from all over the world set out with ideas of an after-lunch stroll and found themselves scaling glaciers in sub-zero temperatures. Twenty-two thousand suffered the agony of the Chilkoot Pass on the Canadian-American border (above). To carry his supplies to the top, each man had to make the climb 30 to 40 times. This took three months – and then he had 600 miles still to go. Less than half the Klondikers ever arrived. Of those who did, half again were so demoralized that they took one look at Dawson, the gold-fields' only town, turned round and started straight back home. By summer 1899 it was all over.

All winter, men half-fed, unwashed and stinking with diarrhoea became links in an iron-willed human chain dragging itself up Chilkoot Pass.

At the top, the Klondikers piled up the one year's supplies that the Mounties ruled every man must have to pass from Alaska into Canada.

ON THE MAP the routes to the Klondike looked deceptively simple. In this one, from a special gold-rush atlas, an inset for British Klondikers recommends either an Atlantic crossing and a journey on the Canadian Pacific Railway, or a voyage round Cape Horn to southern Alaska. There was an option of an all-water route inland via the Bering Sea and the Yukon River. But the main routes led inland across the "panhandle" of Alaska, from Dyea to the Chilkoot Pass, or from nearby Skagway Harbour to the Dead Horse Trail (White Pass), and finally along the Yukon.

Klondike or Bust!

From that wild moment in July, 1897, when two rusty steamers docked at Seattle and San Francisco with three tons of gold aboard, Klondike madness spread like an epidemic. Tram-drivers, clerks, lawyers, barbers, doctors, and policemen threw up their jobs and spent their savings on tickets to the gold-fields. "Klondike or Bust" was their motto and, for most of them, "Bust" it was.

By mid-winter, thousands were stranded all over north-western Canada and Alaska, shivering in Suckerville halfway up the Yukon River or cutting off gangrenous toes with hacksaws on the Edmonton Trail. Many were already destitute, especially in the lawless Alaskan port of Skagway. There, Soapy Smith and his gang charged five dollars for telegrams "sent" along non-existent wires and squeezed the last dimes out of beaten men who had turned back from Dead Horse Trail, the grave of nearly 3,000 pack-horses. So exhausting was this pass that, people swore, one demented animal committed suicide by jumping off a cliff.

A tough-looking "Lady Klondiker" who never reached the gold-fields puts on a brave face as she poses for a news photograph on her way home in 1899.

When spring came, the stench of rotting horseflesh rose from thousands of carcasses along the 45 miles of Dead Horse Trail, the pass from Skagway into Canada.

Jubilant miners pause during the spring "clean-up" to display the large gold nuggets caught in their sluice-box as the accompanying gravel from the mine is washed away.

Poor Man's Gold

The men mining at Klondike that winter of 1897–98 were old-timers, many of them veterans of the California gold-rush of 1849. They had been filtering into the Yukon Valley since the 1880s and they were a quite different breed from the tenderfeet still struggling up the Chilkoot Pass. They were used to the hardship of a miner's life.

In the perpetual twilight of the sub-arctic winter, smoke rose vertically into the anaesthetizing air, forming a grey shroud over their dingy, smelly little huts. Though rich in gold, these men were cut off from civilization and supplies and they lived like animals in semi-hibernation, crouching by the stoves where they cooked a monotonous diet of bacon, beans and tea. At work outside, they stooped double in their smoky mine-shafts like moles. Through the winter, they burned their way into the frozen ground, lighting wood fires at night, digging out the thawed earth next morning, lighting new fires deeper down till they had burrowed to the "paystreak" where the gold lay between layers of gravel.

In the spring thaw, they built sluice-boxes, channelled streams through them and shovelled in the "paydirt." The gravel was washed away, but the heavier gold was caught on cross-bars and matting in the bottom, gleaming alluringly.

DATE OF ISSUE 2/3/98 No. 13334

DOMINION OF CANADA

FREE MINER'S CERTIFICATE.

PLACE OF ISSUE VANCOUVER NON-TRANSFERABLE. VALID FOR ONE YEAR ONLY.

This is to Certify that J. Crouch
of Staffordcross Eng. has paid me this day the
sum of Ten Dollars and is entitled to all the rights and
privileges of a Free Miner, under any Mining Regulations of the Government
of Canada, for one year from the 2nd day of March 1898

This Certificate shall also grant to the holder thereof the privilege of Fishing and Shooting, subject to the provisions of any Act which has been passed, or which may hereafter be passed for the protection of game and fish; also the privilege of Cutting Timber for actual necessities, for building houses, boats, and for general mining operations; such timber, however, to be for the exclusive use of the miner himself, but such permission shall not extend to timber which may have been heretofore or which may hereafter be granted to other persons or corporations.

Countersigned CUSTOMS CANADA MAR 2 1898

To be Countersigned by Gold Commissioner, Mining Recorder, or by an Officer or Agent of the Department of Interior.

Deputy of the Minister of the Interior.

This certificate conferred the right to mine the "free gold" of the Klondike – dust and nuggets that could be freely extracted with equipment no more sophisticated than a shovel.

These Klondike pioneers of 1897 were rich, but before the rush of building in 1898, there was nothing better than a shack to be had in Dawson.

Swaggering, Bawdy Dawson

When the ice thawed in May, 1898, Dawson was still a half-starved camp. But now the Yukon River was flowing again, a human torrent of Klondikers poured in, their home-made boats laden with supplies. One man had brought live chickens over the Chilkoot Pass, and a crowd of miners gathered to watch the first egg of the year laid. It sold for $5.

By August Dawson had become a city of 18,000 inhabitants, four-fifths American. It was a city with a Wild West swagger, with bawdy dance-hall turns and wild gambling. But there were no gun-fights, for the Canadian Mounties kept order with admirable firmness.

While it lasted it was a glorious carnival, but by the summer of 1899, with the last weary Klondikers still arriving, it was nearly over. Gold had been discovered in Alaska, a new rush had begun and the music stopped in the ghostly dance-halls of Dawson.

The Mounties, earning $1.20 a day, scrupulously enforced the law on men who gambled away $50,000 in a night.

In Dawson while it boomed, Front Street was thronged with wealthy miners who came to throw away their gold in the saloons and gaming-houses of this Broadway of the north.

Snake Hips Lulu and the other dance-hall girls battened on prospectors because, as one entertainer put it, "the poor ginks have gotta spend it, they're that scared they'll die before they get it all out of the ground."

A lot of merchandise was on sale in Dawson in 1898 but, with street frontage costing up to $5,000 a foot, prices were high, often 500 per cent higher than in New York.

A miner buying groceries casually pours gold-dust from his poke for weighing. This was the normal method of payment in Dawson.

This unnamed actress was far prettier than most Dawson girls who were tough, plain or even, like the one-eyed lady called "Grizzly Bear," ugly.

III. Canada Comes of Age

A prime factor in Canada's new prosperity was immigration. Between 1871 and 1901 Canada lost 1½ million people to the United States, drawn south by the greater opportunities available there. The nation's net increase in population had been only about 60,000 a year. Now, suddenly, people came to Canada – and stayed. They stampeded on to the western plains to claim their free homesteads at the remarkable rate of 300,000 a year, some of them struggling even farther west through mountain wastes to seek gold on the Klondike.

The westward rush of immigrants compelled the creation of 1905 of two new provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan. As late as 1901, in the region comprised of those two and Manitoba, there were only 400,000 people. By 1911 there were 1,300,000. During that period the area under wheat cultivation increased dramatically by 400 per cent.

Wheat was as important to the new prosperity as were the immigrants who came to farm it. A Canadian named Charles E. Saunders developed a new variety, "Marquis," which matured sooner and yielded more bushels per acre than had any wheat grown in Canada up to this time. Europe's demands for grain increased; wheat prices climbed; freight costs went down. Canada boomed.

The economic revival gave Canadians new confidence – enough confidence to begin asking themselves what they were. *Were* they Canadians? What then, about the "British subject I was born?" These questions were influenced by the old French v. English struggle, but were not primarily about that. They were questions about the nation's constitution, not its race. Laurier, himself French-born with French as his first language, proudly represented Canada at Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, and frankly admitted that he enjoyed dealing in imperial affairs, but he found it impossible to say "when nation ended and Empire began."

The questions were not idle ones. The future conduct of the Canadian nation depended on the answers. "Our existence as a nation," said Laurier, "is the most anomalous that has yet existed." Canada could regulate her tariffs, control her immigration, raise and manage her own armed forces. On the other hand, she could not treat with a foreign power, not even her next-door neighbour, without going through London.

As to what her role should be and what powers and responsibilities she should have, no convincing answers emerged before the First World War. There was a general desire to remain in Empire, but no clear-cut consensus on particular questions such as sharing in imperial defence. Laurier sent a Canadian contingent to support Britain in the Boer War, but mainly because his English-speaking electorate demanded it. And this kind of allegiance was not always repaid. In 1901, despite Canada's objections, the Mother Country gave up her right to share control of the future Panama Canal with the United States. And in a dispute with the U.S. about the Canadian-Alaskan boundary in 1903, the British member of the judicial panel voted for America.

Probably the best hints to Canada's future were in the nation's instinctive responses, her impulsive acts. After Laurier negotiated, in 1911, a mild, limited reciprocal free trade agreement with the United States – far, far less radical than the virtual commercial union he had advocated in 1891 – he lost the election which followed soon after. President Taft had not helped by saying that "Canada stands at the parting of the ways." Clearly, one characteristic of Canada was that she resented being pushed, especially by the United States of America.

Another instinct was demonstrated in 1914. After the years of wrangling over sharing imperial defence, when Britain and Germany went to war, Canada immediately committed herself, and not just with a promise of ships. Six hundred thousand men, more than a twentieth of her entire population, enlisted to fight, and 50,000 of them remained in Europe, buried. The old bond still held firm ❧

British emigrants pose for an advertisement at the turn of the century before departing to the empty prairies of the Canadian West.

Officer, 2nd Life Guards, 1844